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Michiel Moll

The Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) (South Africa)

Petro Coreejas-Brink

The Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) (South Africa)

Joanne Arendse

The Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) (South Africa)

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THE FUTURE OF OUR CHILDREN – PROVIDING LIBRARY SPACES FOR FUTURE EDUCATORS AT THE CAPE PENINSULA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY (CPUT)

Michiel Moll, Petro Coreejes-Brink, Joanne Arendse
CPUT, South Africa Mollm@cput.ac.za

Abstract

The Cape Peninsula University of Technology has two different campuses on which teacher training takes place – the Mowbray campus with around 2500 education students and the Wellington campus with its 2000 education students. Both campuses were originally designed and built as Colleges of education but were incorporated into the Cape Technikon in 2001 and CPUT in 2005. The libraries were designed to cater for both academic and teaching needs, with many different collections. However these have changed dramatically in nature and use in the last ten years. It was decided to remodel both libraries and incorporate a specialised area containing the material as would be found in school libraries. This paper outlines the history of the changes due to merger and negotiations with architects and builders, temporary premises and the process of finalising the move into the new spaces. In particular, attention is paid to the education students, and how their dualistic academic and practical education needs place a special burden on libraries, and how the design, content and collections of these newly revamped libraries are designed to try and address these.

Keywords: School Library; Education Library; Academic libraries; Cape Peninsula University of Technology; Library spaces

Libraries for educators

Introduction and background

With the new democratic dispensation in South Africa from 1994 a new constitution was designed to lead the country into the future. This constitution redefined internal borders with the disappearance of the so-called “homelands”, and the creation of nine provinces in the place of the previous four. The powers and scope of the three tiers of government were also redefined, with all post-school education now being a national competence and no longer the ambit of the different provincial departments of education.

One result of this was that the 111 colleges of education were given an ultimatum in 1996 – either become independent Higher Education Providers, or be taken over by an Existing Higher Education Institution (HEI). The actual process and results of this are discussed in more detail below. However it must be realized that, prior to this, In the Western Cape a process of rationalising Education Colleges had already been undertaken by the new Western Cape Provincial Government, under whom they fell, and this in fact followed a separate process of rationalisation under the Provincial Government of the Cape in the 1980’s in the education sector dealing with whites.

Colleges of Education had existed in Wellington since 1897. The present library was built originally in 1964 in a building phase that also included the demolition of the house in which the famous Great Trek leader Piet Retief was born. At that time it was part of the Wellington Teachers’ College. In 1990 the Wellington Teacher’s College and the Paarl Teachers College (Onderwyskollege Paarl or OKP) were amalgamated by the Cape Education Department into the Boland College of Education which continued in the buildings of the Wellington Teachers College, and with most of its staff, as well as those of Paarl who agreed to move across.

Further colleges were also incorporated into the Boland College of Education by the Cape Education Department: Denneoord (from Stellenbosch) in 1992 and Graaff-Reinet (in 1991) [Anker 2007]. All these colleges had one thing in common: they were dedicated to the training of

teachers for primary education. However, Graaff-Reinet and Paarl had incorporated the training of Wood and Metalwork teachers for high schools: a course that was moved to Wellington with these students actually being registered students of the University of Stellenbosch [Moll 2001]. Unusually during this phase a college dedicated to the training of teachers and run by the Coloured Department of Education, the Athlone College in Paarl, was also amalgamated into the Boland College of Education in 1992. This also led to the appointment of the first teaching staff who were classified as non-white as staff from Athlone were also given the opportunity to join the staff of the Boland College of Education.

In that initial phase in Cape Town the Barkly Davis College and Mowbray College of Education had become one institution, still called the Mowbray College of Education using mainly the Mowbray facilities, but also parts of Barkly Davis.

In the second phase the new post-1994 political dispensation led to all colleges in the new province, the Western Cape, now being looked at. The Athlone College in Crawford was now amalgamated with the Mowbray College of education with a new name – the Cape Town College of Education and functioning on the premises previously used by the Mowbray College. Incidentally, the premises used by the Athlone College of Education eventually became the Crawford campus of the Cape Town College – and in 2016 an agreement was reached between CPUT leading the library to visit these premises to ensure that library facilities were adequate. This still left four other colleges: the Good Hope College in Khayalitsha, the Kuilsriver College of Education, the Roggebaai College (which was only for distance education) and the Sonhe College in Worcester.

This provincial overview was followed by a larger national imperative. In the 1994 constitution, all tertiary training was declared a national affair, and it was this that eventually led to the ultimatum to the colleges of education. All colleges of education (at that stage 11 in number) had to be moved from provincial control to national control, together with nursing colleges and colleges of agriculture. Although, as shown earlier, colleges of nursing did not immediately change their status the same was not true of colleges of education.

Due to the high number of these colleges and their different kinds of control and management, having fallen under no less than 11 different departments of education, various recommendations were made and models studied. This finally led to a declaration that, based on the Higher Education Act of 1997 [South Africa 1997] and subsequent mid 1998 recommendations in a document called “The Incorporation of Colleges of Education into the Higher Education Sector: A Framework for Implementation” [DoE 1998], all colleges would have to form part of a merged institution or become autonomous. The choice of autonomy was very quickly seen by colleges as being one that was impractical [Reddy 2002: 101] and colleges were told by the Department of Education that ‘they could no longer investigate the route of autonomy’ [Soobrayan 2002: 27].

However, the national department gave no guidance as to which college should amalgamate with which Higher Education Institution (HEI). The decision as to which institution was that to the colleges and of the institutions themselves. This meant, in practise, that the colleges had to find an institution willing to take them over. .

Initial discussions between the University of Stellenbosch and the Boland College of Education led nowhere, but an unexpected offer was received from the Cape Technikon. This was partly due to their school of Teacher education being in imminent danger of being closed down, and this gave them the opportunity to become their own faculty. This incorporation was initially envisaged to be a take-over as a running concern, i.e. with no changes to staff and importantly retention by the staff of their years of service. However, this model was changed by the National Department of Education into an incorporation with a two-phased approach. Firstly, all the physical assets of the college, land, buildings and contents, as well as students and courses, would be transferred to the Technikon, and, secondly, the Technikon would be responsible for staffing, with the proviso that existing staff would have priority [Cape Technikon 2000]. This same process was taking place simultaneously at the Cape Town College of Education.

The change from a situation where staff had an initial promise by the Technikon that no staff member would be without employment, and would in fact be better off, to a new situation where

existing staff were merely on secondment and then had to apply for what would be in effect their own positions (with numbers, levels and salaries still uncertain) caused considerable frustration, as well as a reluctance/inability to be wholeheartedly committed to the Technikon cause. This unfortunately also caused staff of these two sites to be cynical about the merger between the Peninsula Technikon and Cape Technikon when it occurred later.

Although the Memorandum of Understanding was already signed in 1999 [Anker 2007], the physical handover took place on 1 February 2001 with the staff appointments still unmade. However, various directives had been issued from the Technikon indicating changes on which the Technikon management in Cape Town had decided. These were not always practical and resulted in great frustration: a lesson that was well learnt by the library for the next merger.

The main physical differences were in some ways small - the issuing of student cards (a novelty for college of education students), increased IT connectivity, including moving the existing link with the University of Stellenbosch that had run from the library to a link with the Cape Technikon network. For staff, the provision of IT facilities in a shared environment and gradually in each office was a major change, although this did take some time at both sites. [Moll 2001].

During the compulsory phase indicated above, there were no HEI's to take over the Good Hope, Roggebaai or Sohnga colleges. The Western Cape Education Department wished to retain the Kuilsriver College, which was on the newest campus and had, in many ways, the best facilities and access

Whatever the rationale, by the time the Cape Technikon and the Peninsula Technikon merged, the Cape Technikon library system now also included the two libraries of the colleges. In both cases during the period between joining Cape Technikon and the merger, the library collections of the colleges were added on the Aleph Library Management System (LMS), a huge undertaking as each colleges' collection was roughly equal in size to that of the Cape Technikon with over 70 000 items each.

Additional difficulties were the addition of different types of material as the Colleges of education had not only had academic books on a tertiary level, but also had school level textbooks, non-fiction and reading books, including picture books for the beginning years of reading. In addition they had large collections of different kinds of material used for teaching, such as posters, cassettes, Compact discs (CD's) and even more outdated items such as slides and transparencies. The cataloguing of all this material was done on card, and the process of transferring it onto the system was done, firstly in-house by the staff members appointed by the Technikon to the site, and then a six-month project employing four cataloguers at each site in order to ensure the completeness of the cataloguing. It was the lessons learned from this that prompted the different way that the Athlone collection was done when they joined after the merger.

A detailed study of the merger of these libraries with that of the Cape Technikon done in 2010 showed how the lessons learned during that merger enabled greater insights from the Cape Technikon in its merger with the Peninsula Technikon [Moll 2010].

It was this dual nature of these libraries – supplying both academic material and also being responsible for supplying teaching support material that would be an important factor in the changes made to them after the merger.

One of the other issues that was addressed at both the Mowbray and Wellington sites was the issue of the way that material had been described on the system. In 2001 the Cape Technikon had given instructions that this was to be done by the staff on site, using the newly installed Aleph system. At that time the system was on version 14 and this had distinct limitations as to what could be input quickly by staff on the floor, as opposed to the full bibliographic details that were done by cataloguers.

The result was that although the material was loaded on the system, in many cases only brief records were loaded and, in some instances, due to the text length limitation of the earlier Aleph version, not even the full titles of material could be entered. In any case, the system did not allow

for the loading of subject search terms, thus leaving the material of the ex-colleges only discoverable through author and title. As a result of this issue, the library applied for funding to allow cataloguers to be appointed at the two sites on a temporary basis to upgrade or even add (where this had not yet been done) the necessary records. In each case this was a team of four cataloguers, with one assistant, and one member of the team was appointed as chief. The decision was also taken that the manager on site would have no say or authority over the cataloguers, and could only recommend where they start. Although many items were done, the whole process was not a success as the efficiency and productivity of these cataloguers proved to be very low and on advice of the managers at Wellington and Mowbray this project was ended after six months.

The issue of short records from the ex-colleges still persists to this day, but the Technical services staff are rather dealing with it longitudinally. In any case, most of the records still needing attention are fiction titles and the ability to search these by title and author is what is needed and so the actual functionality is no longer an issue.

Wellington after the merger

With the merger in 2005 the library at Wellington had just undergone a major upgrade, with the work of moving in actually only being completed during 2005. This remodelling was designed to allow the setting up of a computer laboratory for general use (as opposed to teaching) and was the first such facility on the campus. At the same time a teaching laboratory as well as sound rooms, offices for IT staff and a seminar room were added on, and changes made to the main counter and workroom for staff. Despite these changes it was soon realized that a much larger extension would be needed and from 2007 this was motivated, leading to the very large extensions from 2015 to 2017.

During 2007 the staffing for the branch was finalised. In terms of equitability it was decided that Mowbray and Wellington would have the same staffing levels – 2 librarians, one Senior Library Assistant (SLA), three Library Assistants and one Library Attendant. This resulted in the one contract position being made permanent, and the appointment of an SLA advertised internally. Through all the growth and changes, this staffing level would remain consistent for the next ten years.

Major changes in the library itself were the repurposing of venues at the request of the Faculty. The library was asked to host the Media Specialist in the Faculty and this was done initially in the one new office, but after the cataloguers had left, the seminar room they had occupied was eventually turned into a space for the Media Specialist. The positive relationship that developed was born in mind in the new design and the media specialist will once again be stationed within the library space after 2017.

One of the few special collections held by CPUT is held at the Wellington campus and comprises an Africana collection, with emphasis on education. After the merger this collection was gradually worked on and developed. During the course of this development a strong duplication, particularly in the field of Afrikaans writing, was found to be existent. As a result of negotiation, this was transferred to the Afrikaans Language Museum in Paarl, and a memorandum of understanding agreed to between CPUT and the Museum, allowing mutual research facilities.

The library also participated in various other outreach and partnership programs and specialised in working together with the Education Faculty or the campus SRC in doing this. Support was given in terms of material, fund-raising, training of learners and also the set-up of school libraries at primary schools in the area. In this regard the lack of library facilities at schools, particularly as highlighted by the Equal education NGO, became an important issue for both the libraries supporting education. However it was also realized that unless teachers were trained to use the libraries in their teaching when they reached the schools, there would be little point in having them. When the opportunity came in 2014 to again discuss further extensions, both at Mowbray and Wellington, the concept of creating a Model School Library was brought to the fore.

At Wellington the initial plan was then to build a new teaching block for Foundation Phase teaching, that being the first three years of formal schooling, and also supporting the pre-school

teaching component. Within this block, then, would be a dedicated school library, set up and containing the material that would support Foundation Phase and pre-school teaching. A site on the existing campus, close to the existing library was selected and initial requirements for plans gathered by the Facility Management Team. Designs were also influenced by input from a month long visit made to various libraries in Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands in 2013 during an Eurosa visit by the then Deputy Director and Senior Librarian in charge of the facilities at both Mowbray and Wellington.

Unfortunately it was found that the planned site fell within the newly defined river flood boundary and so the site was rejected as unusable by the local municipality. This led to a rethink of the project and the existing building was targeted for extension on the existing footprint. This included a refurbishment and extension of the library to create the necessary space. However, on inspection of the roof, it was found that this would have to be replaced completely as it was unsafe. The design allowed for a new roof which was then easily extended to cover the new design as envisaged.

This was fortunate as during the construction phase in 2017 the roofs of the lecture facilities near the library, all having been part of the 1964 construction, actually started giving way resulting in the declaration of those entire wings as unsafe and leading to all the roofs having to be replaced, without the advantage that the library had that this was thus part of an enhanced design.

Due to the nature of the construction which included large sections of demolition and reconstruction it was found that it would be impossible for the library to continue functioning in the space during construction. At the end of 2015 the entire library was moved out and set up in the hall and foyer of the main campus buildings – the CP van der Merwe Hall. As it was found impossible to set up enough shelving to house the entire collection, a selection was made of the material most used and the remainder (which included about half the collection, including all the Africana collection) was carefully boxed and placed in two hired containers. During the 2017 stocktake it was impossible to look at these so they were carefully left out of the stocktake.

Construction commenced after the CPUT Facilities management had removed not only the furniture (much of which was needed in the hall) but also many of the fixtures such as shelving, counters and built in desks for safe-keeping and reinstallation, as these items had not been planned to be replaced. There was an initial delay in construction, including handover of the site and unfortunately during this phase large scale theft of metal fittings (including a 20m balustrade) took place.

The construction and finishing which was meant to have been completed in time for the library to move back for a January 2017 opening not only overran considerably, but occupation was also delayed by the municipality not being able to issue an occupation certificate due to problems with water supply. Eventually the move back was done, however, with the library functioning in its refurbished building from February 2018.

Mowbray after the merger

Although in not as extensive a fashion as at Wellington, the library at Mowbray had also undergone smaller changes under the Cape Technikon. These were mostly linked to making computers available to staff, to students for use as catalogues (these then being placed near the entrance) and also as a room for training. Unlike Wellington, however, there were no extensions to the existing library but space within the library was repurposed to achieve this. Changes were done at the counter, however, to allow better access to copiers and also the picture collection.

Staffing, too, reflected the pattern in Wellington with the fixed complement of two librarians, one Senior Library Assistant, three Assistants and one Library Attendant mirroring that of Wellington. Also as with Wellington this did lead to contract staff being given permanent appointments. One of the features of Mowbray, though, was the turnover in staff under the Librarian level, as with other CPUT libraries being close by staff could apply to and from these other sites. Thus whereas at Wellington in ten years only two staff under Librarian level moved to or from other branches, at Mowbray in the same time there were some 8 such moves. Another one of the main staffing differences was that whereas at Wellington the Librarians changed with four different staff

members being librarians there, at Mowbray the two staff members appointed after the merger have stayed the same.

Mowbray, too, has been involved in outreach at schools but in their case this was done more directly by the library and not as much in conjunction with the faculty or campus SRC. Initially the campus also housed more Business students, but in 2015 Retail Management moved their students to the Cape Town campus and by 2018 there were only Education and Sports Management students on the campus.

During the consolidation phase the Education Departments that had been at the Bellville Campus, as part of the Pentech Faculty of Science, were moved to the Mowbray Campus with this move being finalised at the end of 2011. This large addition in terms of both staff and students was also one of the catalysts for the refurbishment and extensions to the Education facilities, including the libraries, at both Wellington and Mowbray. The granting of funding by the National Department specifically for upgrading of teacher training facilities was another important factor as at these two sites this funding was also used to upgrade the libraries.

As with Wellington a large-scale refurbishment and changes to the library were planned, with the discussions starting in 2013 and planning starting in 2014 and also including the setting up of an area to serve as a Model School library. However the construction envisaged was initially not as drastic as at Wellington and it was felt that the library could continue in its space. This was done in the first term of 2015, but when construction became more serious in April, it was decided that the staff could continue in the space but students would not be allowed to work in the library. However, when certain building issues became more apparent and the scope of the changes started being fully realized, it was felt that they, too, would have to move.

So in June 2015 the Mowbray library also moved into a hall – that of the Barkly Davis building over the road. This was much smaller than the space used by Wellington and so a much smaller proportion of the collection could be moved. However, unlike Wellington, it was felt that the rest could stay in the branch as the shelves were not being removed. This was done and the books placed behind plastic. This arrangement placed the additional responsibility on staff to collect urgent book requests from the library as the status of collections left in the branch remained unchanged. Contrary to Wellington library the items in “storage” at Mowbray could be accessed.

The Mowbray construction took place faster than that at Wellington and in January 2017 the library moved into its new refurbished premises with a conference centre, seminar rooms and model school library added. Despite being open for business, teething troubles including stabilizers stolen from shelving which had led to their collapse and the lack of IT connectivity led to a fairly long period of frustration and settling in and so it was only during the course of the year could be said to be fully functional and not having to concentrate on issues regarding the move

Conclusion

Although the Mowbray and Wellington campuses were much smaller in terms of the number of staff and students that they served, with typically around 7 and 8 % of all students, there collections and the use thereof was disproportionately high. Up to 40% of all transactions were registered at these two sites, and the collections also made out around 40% of all the physical items available. The sites also came with a very strong history of close cooperation with the Education Faculty which not only provided the bulk of students and staff at the sites, but was also the only Faculty not centred at either Bellville or Cape Town, with its headquarters being Mowbray.

These libraries continue to play a vital role and although much of the teaching aids have moved from the initial collections, education students still depend on the libraries to provide them with aids such as posters, reading series books and school textbooks – a service that differentiates these sites from the other libraries. The new, innovative changes made to these libraries spaces will contribute to enhanced user information experiences and cater for both academic and teaching needs.

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